

**CARIEN QUIROGA**

Visual Artist & Arts Educator  
Howard County Detention Center,  
7301 Waterloo Rd, Jessup, MD, 20794

1<sup>st</sup> May 2025

**Att: The Honorable Stephanie A. Gallagher**  
United States District Judge

I am writing to you in support of Mr. Justin Riggs who is a participant in the Mural Painting Program at the Howard County Detention Center, of which I am the facilitator. I am a Visual Artist on the Maryland State Arts Councils' Teaching Artist Roster, and for the past 15 years I have facilitated visual art and mural painting workshops, working with arts organizations serving incarcerated and system impacted adults and youth. I have been delivering programming at Howard County Detention Center since 2022.

I first met Mr. Riggs in February 2023 when he participated in an 8-week Visual Arts & Writing workshop and I have since then consistently worked with him as he was enrolled in the CorrespondARTS program, a distance learning project of the Justice Arts Coalition, and most longstanding in the Mural Painting Program that meets weekly. He is currently one of a small team of artists selected to work with me on designing and painting murals located in the Educational Programming Center, Library, Visitation Area, Chapel and Mental Health Unit of the Howard County Detention Center. He has additionally worked on a mural that will be installed at the Department of Social Services in Howard County. Justin has also been my Teaching Assistant during weekly art classes on the Mental Health Unit.

In all the time that I have known Mr. Riggs and during each encounter that we have had, he has proven to be not only an inspiring artist but an exceptional human being. Mr. Riggs is a valuable and vital artist on the mural painting team and other programs I facilitated, who has taken every opportunity to develop new skills, educate himself and excel in every assignment given. It is, however, his capacity to be a positive and supportive force to his fellow artists that is equally impressive. I have consistently witnessed his empathy, encouragement and ability to uplift others, including myself, during our many hours spent together. He never misses an opportunity to share positivity, be a listening ear and provide support and words of advice to others. In addition to his artistic contributions to the collaborative mural projects he has also demonstrated exceptional leadership, problem-solving and creative decision-making skills that laid the foundation for the operations and code of conduct of the Mural Painting Program. He has always gone above and beyond the call of duty to do design work on his own time in between workshop sessions and to do what it takes to get a project done, even when faced with challenges.

As my Teaching Assistant on the MHU he has been remarkable in the way that he brings levity, positive energy and an encouraging spirit to each of our visual art sessions as we work with a challenging population. He is also deeply invested in the general wellbeing and improvement of the incarcerated community as demonstrated by the proposal of a garden program for the facility. Justin leaves behind an undeniable positive legacy and he will be dearly missed as a part of the mural painting team and as my assistant. Mr. Riggs has an enormous capacity to have a positive impact on our society, and I know that he will succeed in all his future endeavors.

Thank you in advance for your consideration,

*Carien Quiroga*



***The Journey***  
**Educational Program Center**  
**2024**



### **Mural Themes & Design Inspiration:**

- **Reflection on the incarceration experience**
- **Resilience & Hope**
- **Personal Growth**
- **Working towards personal goals**
- **Overcoming challenges**



**Mural Artist: Justin Riggs**

A journey begins.

**Despair, lost at sea**

**no direction nor navigation**

**destination yet to be.**

**Sails full, floral tide**

**sunset or sunrise.**

**Strong current, hopeful waves.**

**Arbor of life transferring woes.**

**Depression, anguish**

**create a sad blue rose.**

**Water flowing changing for right**

**beyond floral cover**

**emerges a house of light.**

**Love restored**

**a guiding beacon shone**

**a yellow rose to welcome you home.**







***“Floral Tranquility”***

**Mental Health Unit Mural Project**  
**2025**



### **Mural Themes & Design Inspiration:**

- Create a tranquil and meditative environment for incarcerated individuals housed on the Mental Health Unit
- Visually de-institutionalize Mental Health Unit to enhance therapeutic impact

